

away too, in a few years." Nancy spoke with heat. Jim sat by the stove, his knees hunched up near his chin, his big hands clasping and unclasping themselves, about them. "It ain't as though you was a poor man, Jim, though even then you'd need your children's help. No farmer ever can get enough help. But listen to me: Young folks demand a certain amount of pleasure. It's their right. Law bless you! Children are jest like young calves or colts. They must play. Now, what have you got round here to entice your children to stay? There ain't no musical instrument, far as I've been able to discover. Even a wheezy old organ'd be better than nothin'. Then there ain't no books except a couple of fly-specked almanacs and some mail order catalogues."

"Mely says Estelle used to spend more time readin' books than doin' housework, so she burned a lot of 'em."

"An' lost Estelle!"

"As for the pianny, I was willin' to git one for the gals, but their ma said 'No; wait a while.' She said they'd be hammerin' on it 'stead of washin' the dishes."

"An' so now both of your gals is gone an' Mely has to wash the dishes herself."

"Dolly helps her."

"Soon she won't have even Dolly. You jest wait, Jim. I'm goin' to talk to Mely too an' see if I can't open her eyes. She was brought up by a couple of Scotch old maid aunts that'd skin a flea for its hide an' tallow. I remember how they used to jump on poor Mely if she stayed too long porin' over a book, an' set her to doin' carpet rags. When them aunts died, Jim, there was five trunkfuls of quiltin' pieces an' several boxes filled with sewn carpet rags an' a houseful of silly antimacassars an' other dust-ketchers, an' the moths had got into every single thing! There was the work of their lifetime gone an' nothin' else to their memory. They used to often quote that verse from Proverbs, to Mely, the one about the good housewife whose price was above rubies an' whose children should rise up an' call her blessed. But they used bad grammar an' I used to wish they'd spend a little more time improvin' their minds. I'm a frost on grammar myself Jim, but I, too, was brought up so strict I had no time for the niceties."

As Nancy finished speaking, she noticed Jim's thumb, which was tied up in a rag.

"Had an accident?" she asked, solicitously.

"Burnt it this mornin' makin' Mely a cup of tea," Jim replied.

"Oh, yes—that broken spout on the kettle! That reminds me: Jim Banks, I'm goin' to ask you to part with some money, quite a bit of money."

Jim reached a hand into his pocket.

"I ain't got much on me, Nance—"

"No, I didn't expect you'd have the amount there I want," Nancy broke in coolly. "I want two thousand dollars."

"Two thousand grandmothers! What fer, Nance? Is Cy in the hole?"

"Cy's all right. I want the money for a good purpose. I know you got it an' I want it afore you spend it buyin' up more land which you don't need any more than I need another head."

"Who said—"

"Oh, a little bird, Jim. Soon's I heard you was figgerin' on buyin' that other farm I thought to myself, 'Poor Mely, she'll hev to do the pioneer act all over agin, an' at her age it'll go hard,' an' I thought what fools these mere men be. Hand me a cheque for the amount, Jim."

"No, siree! What d' you think I am? You gotta show me first—"

"All right."

Nancy went upon a search for paper and pencil, and then pulling up a chair to the table proceeded to make out an odd-looking document. It took her all of half-an-hour before she had it to suit her. Then she passed it across to Jim Banks.

"Sunrise Farm Co-operative Company," he read at the top and, further, "the shareholders are eight in number, each holding equal shares in the farm—"

"Ridiculous!" snorted Jim. "The gals won't—"

"The gals are every bit as important as the boys, Jim. Don't you put off them gals with a cow or a feather-bed apiece an' turn the home over to the boys! You be on the square. It pays. Now read on."

The rest of the paper was similar to a table of estimates. Under the head of "Improvements," Jim read:

To one cooking range	\$60.00
To one kitchen cabinet	40.00
To one refrigerator	40.00
To one window in kitchen	10.00
To one window in pantry	5.00
To new cooking utensils	20.00
To new kitchen floor	100.00
To wash-house	150.00
To magazines (subscriptions)	10.00
To new wallpaper	30.00
To new cellar	500.00
To sundries	35.00

Total

\$2,000.00
Jim Banks growled a good deal over this proposed expenditure, but being good-natured and Nancy possessing a specious set of arguments he finally gave in and agreed to become a co-plotter.

"I haven't mentioned the piano in that list," said Nancy. "You an' the gals can pick one out in town."

Merrily the plans went on, Jim entering into them with zest once his heart was in the affair.

Upon the first day that Mely sat up in a chair, the trap was sprung. She had noticed the peculiar noises, the mysterious whisperings, the guilty looks, for some time past, but had cudgelled her brain to no avail for the cause, and no one would tell her.

Her eldest daughter popped in suddenly upon her with a bowl of soup.

"Estelle!" she cried. "Where—how—when—"

But the entrance of Dora with the remainder of her dinner cut short her exclamations and left her with a great look of astonishment on her nerve-worn thin, lined face.

"We're home to stay," announced Estelle, "and Claude's coming on Monday. Yes, living at home is a sight better than boarding, and then we each have an interest in the land now. Dora and I are going to run races with our gardens this year and Dad says we can sell our fruit and vegetables off the ground or can the stuff or do just what we like, and we're going to send half to the Red Cross."

"Did you hear a terrific bumping noise a little while ago, mother dear?" asked Dora, laughing.

"Yes. What was it? Did the horses get loose?"

"It was the piano. And yesterday the refrigerator and other things came. The men have just got through papering the kitchen, and next week the new floor is to be put in. Oh, we're going to have a mighty nice home here after a while!"

"And first folks in the to be Cy and Nancy Hartman, mother. We'll give them a party here just as soon as everything's finished, won't we?"

Nancy's step was heard in the next room, and presently she entered.

"You oughter be a mighty contented body, Mely," she remarked with a smile. "All your family home."

"I am," said Mely, with flushed face and a brighter eye than she had since girlhood. "But I got an idee its due to you—"

"Whisht! I just come in to say that I reckon I'll be goin' home this afternoon, myself."

There was a chorus of regrets.

"These here surprises hev mighty nigh been the death of me," she went on with a wink at the girls. "An' I need a calm atmosphere. Besides, Cy has jest rung up to say he didn't know there was so many dishes in any one house. I know what that means. There'll be a stack a mountain high, waitin' for me to wash, when I git back. So bye-bye folks, till we meet again."

The Main Question

A man was arrested on the charge of robbing another of his watch and chain, says the Philadelphia Public Ledger. It was said that he had thrown a bag over his victim's head, strangled and robbed him. There was so little evidence, however, that the judge quickly said:

"Discharged!"

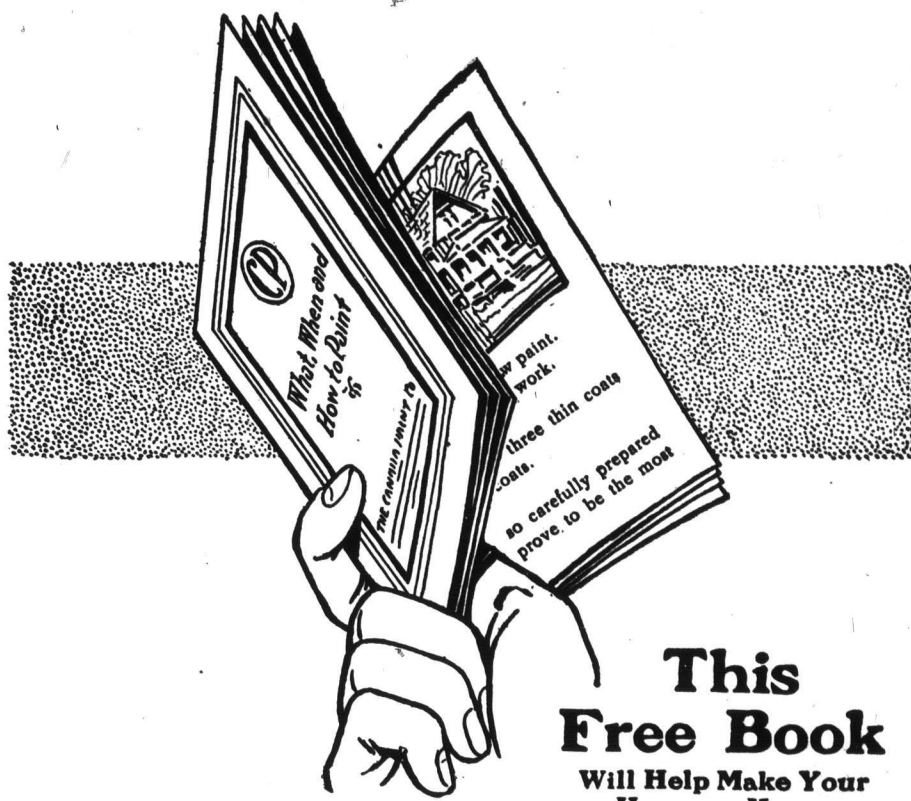
The prisoner stood still in the dock, amazed at being given his freedom so soon.

"You're discharged," repeated the judge. "You can go. You are free."

Still no word from the prisoner, who stood staring at the judge.

"Don't you understand? You have been acquitted. Get out!" shouted the judge.

"Well," stammered the man, "do I have to give him back his watch and chain?"



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